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SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER ON GHANA AS AFRICAN UNION (AU)
CHAIR

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Classified By: PolChief Scott Ticknor for reasons 1.4 d and e.

¶1. (U) Summary: In a March 23 speech to parliament Ghanaian Foreign Minister Nana Akufo-Addo noted President Kufuor's busy agenda of upcoming meetings in his capacity as AU Chair. The centerpiece is the AU Summit in Accra on June 25-July 3, which he said would focus on how the Union should be organized. The Minister provided details about Kufuor's recent trips to the UK, Portugal and Algiers. He urged completion of the AU peacekeeping force deployment in Somalia, was hopeful about the potential role of the new UN Undersecretary General focused on Darfur, and praised the new political agreement on Cote d'Ivoire. The opposition NDC party criticized the Foreign Minister for his failure to mention Zimbabwe. In paras 7-8 we offer additional perspectives on Kufuor's position on Zimbabwe. End summary.

Ghana's Active Diplomacy

¶2. (U) On March 23, Foreign Minister Nana Akufo-Addo addressed parliament about Ghana's role as AU Chair. He depicted Ghana's selection as an acknowledgment of Ghana's 50th anniversary and record of good governance, while acknowledging that Ghana's diplomacy would be "tested to the limits" this year. The image of Ghana has never been higher and the country should contribute to "the flowering of a new African civilization" of freedom, democracy and prosperity," he said.

¶3. (U) Akufo-Addo praised President Kufuor's recent visit to the U.K. as the first of its kind by a Ghanaian leader and a matter of pride for all Ghanaians. Kufuor's subsequent one-day official visit to Portugal focused on expanding bilateral ties and the planned December Africa-Europe summit, which Akufo-Addo hoped would transform Africa's relationship with Europe.

¶4. (U) After Portugal, Kufuor went to Algiers to participate in the AU Heads of State Implementation Committee on NEPAD, which had several accomplishments, according to the Foreign Minister. First, African states agreed that NEPAD would be integrated into AU structures within one year. Second, they agreed to create a new NEPAD Development Agency chaired by Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. Third, the Committee decided that Kufuor would lead a seven-man African delegation to the G-8 meeting in June.

Upcoming Meetings

15. (U) According to Akufo-Addo, President Kufuor will attend or host a number of upcoming meetings important to the continent:

- African Partnership Forum in Berlin in May
- G-8 Summit in Germany in June
- Turkey-Africa summit in Istanbul in June
- AU Summit in Accra June 25-July 3
- AGOA meeting in Accra in July
- India-Africa Summit in late July (venue TBD but probably in India, according to MFA sources)
- African-European Summit in Lisbon in December

16. (U) The Accra summit will focus on the direction of the Union. One option is a federal structure - a "United States of Africa." Another option is to continue with the current arrangement in which the Union is an inter-governmental association along the lines of the European Union. There may also be a desire to adopt some other cooperative political arrangement, he said. This decision needs to reflect the preferences of the African people, he said, emphasizing the need to consult within each country's political system prior to the Accra meeting. He pledged to consult with Ghana's parliament on this issue. Anticipated achievements of the Accra summit also include election of a new Commission membership and Chairperson, as well as NEPAD peer reviews of

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Algeria, Nigeria and South Africa.

Regional Conflicts

17. (U) Akufo-Addo highlighted the urgent need for the AU to complete its introduction of a peacekeeping force into Somalia and to accelerate the political dialogue. He hoped the recent appointment of Congolese Foreign Minister Adada as UN Undersecretary General with special responsibility for Darfur would help bring an end to the killing in Darfur, which he described as "a blot on the conscience of Africa." He praised the new political agreement in Cote d'Ivoire (the Ouagadougou Accord) and the diplomatic skills of Burkina Faso President and ECOWAS Chair Blaise Compoare, who Akufo-Addo said forged an Inter-Togolese Dialogue which appears to be "bearing fruit." He noted that the AU had submitted the Ouagadougou Accord to the UN Security Council for approval.

Opposition Critical on Zimbabwe

18. (U) Parliamentary Minority Leader Albin Bagbin responded to the speech with disappointment that the Minister did not mention Zimbabwe. "We expected the President to go further, what is happening in Zimbabwe cannot be tolerated today," he stated. The Foreign Minister's response was that President Kufuor had already issued a "strong statement" on Zimbabwe. (Note: According to media reports, during a March 14 speech to members of the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, President Kufuor responded to a question from a Zimbabwean in the audience stating "I know that the African Union is very uncomfortable. This situation in your country is very embarrassing." He continued: "I know personally that presidents like Obasanjo and Mbeki and others have tried desperately to exercise some influence for the better. But they came against stiff resistance...In our own various ways we are trying to exercise some influence. I tell you we are serious...I think we should assume that all these institutions, the African Union, mean well. Perhaps we

haven't exhausted the means to give us a handle on the situation so we can help Zimbabwe return to normality." According to a Reuters report, after a meeting with Prime Minister Blair later that day, Kufuor stated "violence, beating up anybody and using brutal force shouldn't be the way forward. The rule of law, accountable governance, allowing constitutions to work properly, should be the way forward for all of us." End note.)

Comment

19. (C) On Zimbabwe: Akufo-Addo's remarks and our subsequent discussions with him and others at the MFA (reftel) clearly indicate that the GOG does not want further public engagement on the situation in Zimbabwe. Minority Leader Bagbin privately told PolChief he thought this was not because Kufuor has a special relationship with Mugabe (Mugabe was closer to Nkrumah's CPP and NDC governments, according to Bagbin). The main reason for Kufuor's hesitation on Zimbabwe, according to Bagbin, is a belief that the Zimbabwe situation is not worse than other African trouble spots like Guinea. Ultimately, Bagbin opined that the Kufuor administration "lacks the moral courage" to criticize Mugabe.

Kufuor is naturally cautious but may be more so because of his AU leadership position, hoping to strike a conciliatory stance while leaving controversial arm twisting to other African leaders. Probably reinforcing his caution is his experience of several years ago when the GOG's public, international criticism of Mugabe was met by domestic accusations that Kufuor was hypocritical for not also condemning authoritarian rule in Togo. There is also a personal dimension that makes rebuking Mugabe difficult. Ambassador saw Kufuor go out of his way to embrace Mugabe during the March 6 Jubilee celebration and after the Jubilee ceremony the GOG ferried Mugabe by helicopter to Sekondi to visit the family of his late wife, a Ghanaian. Kufuor told Ambassador during a preview tour and lunch at the NEC that Mugabe has strong ties to Ghana, that Mugabe visits family here, and that "it is difficult for us."

10. (SBU) On the AU Meetings: The long list of upcoming meetings and trips which will take President Kufuor out of country and occupy his attention will increase Ghana's prestige but distract the President from focusing on domestic

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issues. He and the Foreign Minister (a top contender for the NPP party's presidential ticket) clearly want to use the AU Chair and Ghana's global prominence to build their legacy and gain political points. In his response to Akufo-Addo, Minority Leader Bagbin urged the GOG to prepare better for the AU Summit in July than it had for the Jubilee celebrations. Many foreign Missions (including ours) were frustrated with the GOG's late preparations as well as protocol and logistical lapses during the March Jubilee celebrations. This week, the MFA hosted an evaluation team from the AU to help them prepare for the Summit and MFA sources say this evaluation will be used as a basis to seek assistance from donors. It remains to be seen whether this team and the lessons learned from the Jubilee will help the GOG effectively handle the logistics for the high profile AU Summit. (Note: Ambassador recently met with the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, the Malian Ambassador, to brainstorm about ways the African Corps and colleague Ambassadors could help Ghana improve its protocol performance during the AU and other events. End note.)

